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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0377

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: FIRST QUEBEC REACTIONS TO FINANCE MINISTERS' MEETING

1. BEGIN UNCLAS. LE SOLEIL OF QUEBEC CITY EXAMINED FINANCE MINISTERS' MEETING TODAY IN EDITORIAL HEADLINED "SNEAK-PREVIEW IN OTTAWA." PAPER OBSERVES THAT GOQ REPRESENTATIVES IMPRESSED MANY WITH THEIR GOOD CHEER THEIR MASTERY OF SUBJECT MATTER AND AN ATTITUDE WHICH GAVE USUALLY AUSTERE TALKS A MORE HUMAN ASPECT. WHILE MEETING PROVIDED A SNEAK-PREVIEW WITHOUT DIRECT CONSTITUTIONAL IMPACT, P.Q. MINISTERS TOOK ADVANTAGE OF OCCASION SHOW FIRMLY AND CLEARLY THEIR RUE COLORS - PURSUIT OF POLITICAL EMANCIPATION OF QUEBEC.
THIS MEETING, LE SOLEIL WRITES, WAS NOT EXPECTED BRING ANYTHING REALLY NEW INTO RELATIONS BETWEEN PARTNERS IN CANADIAN PACT. IT WAS AN INFORMAL CONSULTATION WHICH JACQUES PARIZEAU USED ONLY TO GIVE INDICATIONS OF WHAT QUEBEC'S FUTURE FINANCIAL DEMANDS WILL BE. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN INOPPORTUNE AND POLITICALLY INEPT FOR QUEBEC TO OPEN IN SUCH A MEETING WHOLE QUESTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES IT DESIRES.

2. LE SOLEIL NOTES THAT CLAUDE MORIN'S EVALUATION OF QUEBEC ELECTION AND ORIENTATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT WAS MORE UNEXPECTED THAN PARIZEAU'S REMARKS. IN THEIR VIEW. MORIN ATTEMPTED TO CLEARLY EXPLAIN WITHOUT RESTRICTION THE MANNER IN WHICH GOQ INTENDS PROCEED IN ITS APPROACHES TO OTTAWA AND WHAT IT WILL PROPOSE TO REST OF CANADA, WHEN THE MOMENT COMES, AS A NEW TYPE OF
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ASSOCIATION, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND

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NATURAL ASPIRATIONS OF QUEBECOIS TO CONTROL OWN NATIONAL DESTINY. LE SOLEIL OPINED THAT, WHILE THERE WAS NOTHING NEW IN MORIN'S MESSAGE, IT CAME AS A COLD SHOWER TO THOSE WHO DID NOT WANT TO GIVE QUEBEC ELECTION ITS TRUE MEANING OR - EVEN MORE - HAD UNDERSTOOD NOTHING. PARIZEAU AND MORIN GAVE MANY IDEA THAT FEDERAL REGIME MUST CHANGE AND BEND MORE, THAT INDEPENDENCE OF QUEBEC IS NOW PLAUSIBLE, AND THAT PQ GOVERNMENT HAS FIRM DESIRE TO ACHIEVE IT. AT LEAST, THEY CONVINCED THE MOST "INCREDULOUS AND NAIVE" THAT CANADIAN CONSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN AND THAT, EVEN IF INDEPENDENCE PROPERLY SPEAKING IS FAR FROM SURE OF MAJORITY SUPPORT IN QUEBEC, A CERTAIN FORM OF POLITICAL EMANCIPATION AND CHANGE IS WELL UNDER WAY. NOTING THAT MORIN NEVER ACTUALLY USED WORD INDEPENDENCE AND THAT HE SPOKE OF COMPROMISES ACCEPTABLE TO QUEBEC, PAPER EXPRESSED HOPE SNEAK PREVIEW WILL HAVE EFFECT OF LOWERING OF TENSIONS IN COUNTRY. END UNCLAS.

3. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. IN WIDE RANGING LUNCHEON CONVERSATION TODAY, ROBERT TRUDEL, DIRECTOR OF QUEBEC RELATIONS WITH WESTERN HEMISPHERE COUNTRIES, MINISTRY OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, TOLD ME OTTAWA MEETING WENT ABOUT AS EXPECTED. IN HIS VIEW, PARIZEAU'S PERFORMANCE MUST BE SEEN IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CONTINUING DEMANDS QUEBEC HAS BEEN MAKING OVER LAST TWENTY YEARS,. PARIZEZAU, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS AN EXCELLENT, VERY BRIGHT ECONOMIST, WAS NOT IN OTTAWA TO LAUNCH NEW PROJECTS BUT RATHER TO EFFECTIVELY REPRESENT QUEBEC VIEWS ON AGENDA ISSUES JUST AS GARNEAU WOULD HAVE, HAD LIBERALS NOT LOST. MORIN, IN TRUDEL'S VIEW, WAS IN OTTAWA MAINLY TO ARRANGE LEVESQUE'S VISIT NEXT WEEK AND TOOK ADVANTAGE OF FINMIN MEETING TO CLEAR AIR ON GOQ LONGER-RANGE INTENTIONS.

4. ON OTHER SUBJECTS, TRUDEL SAID THAT AN ATMOSPHERE OF CREATIVE EXCITEMENT NOW REIGNS IN THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY. SEVERAL VETERANS OF LAST TEN YEARS OF QUEBEC/OTTAWA BATTLES ARE EXPECTED TO COME INTO MINISTRY TO JOIN MORIN IN HIS NEW TASK. HOWEVER, SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS SUCH AS DEPUTY MINISTER ARTHUR TREMBLAY (A NOTED PRO-FEDERALIST WHO WON ORDER OF CANADA RECENTLY) ARE EXPECTED TO BE KEPT ON IN CURRENT JOBS AS PQ DOES NOT WANT TO ALIENATE ELEMENTS CONFIDENTIAL

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OF POLITICAL POWER IN QUEBEC SOCIETY THEY REPRESENT.

5. TRUDEL SAID THAT LEVESQUE HAS VERY TIGHT CONTROL OF HIS PARTY AND GOVERNMENT AND WILL NOT FEEL FORCED TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE WITH OTTAWA IN NEAR FUTURE AS EVEN MOST ARDENT INDEPENDENTISTS ARE BOWING TO HIS LEADERSHIP. CRUNCH FOR LEVESQUE COULD COME LATE IN 4 YEAR TERM WHEN POSSIBLE ACCUMULATION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS MIGHT AGGRAVATE

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PARTY UNITY AT SAME TIME REFERENDUM IS APPROACHING. TRUDEL BELONGS TO SCHOOL WHICH BELIEVES THAT PQ WILL BE ABLE TO WIN REFERENDUM IF THEY GOVERN WELL. ("PEOPLE WILL GET USED TO IDEA OF INDEPENDENCE OVER TIME.") HOWEVER, HE HASTENED TO ADD THAT MUCH WILL DEPEND ON OTTAWA'S REACTION TO QUEBEC PROPOSALS. HE BELIEVES THAT GOQ WILL HAVE MORE LUCK IN NEGOTIATING WITH OTTAWA IF AN ANGLO-CANADIAN COMES TO POWER IN OTTAWA.

6. COMMENT: TRUDEL IS A MIDDLE LEVEL OFFICIAL WHOSE REMARKS PROBABLY REPRESENT INFORMED CORRIDOR WISDOM IN HIS MINISTRY. PAUCITY OF HIS COMMENTS ON FINMIN MEETING PROBABLY MEANS GOQ STILL ANALYZING ITS RESULTS AND OPINIONS HAVE NOT YET FILTERED DOWN TO WORKING LEVEL. FEELING IS WIDESPREAD HERE THAT MEETING WAS JUST, IN LE SOLEIL'S WORDS, A SNEAK PREVIEW FOR NEXT WEEK'S PREMIERS' MEETING.
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